

INCREASED MOBILITY AND ROTATION

Barriers to Movement and Rotation

1. Increased mobility and rotation are so obscure in meaning and so controversial in their implementation that no one meeting is likely to produce more than a partial consensus concerning what additionally should be done in these areas. If agreement were reached, however, in the Director's Annual Conference, or in the Executive Committee, on a preferred approach or approaches, the effort would be a notable accomplishment and it could provide the basis for establishing detailed policies and procedures later on.

2. Few managerial issues have been discussed more and acted upon less than increased mobility and rotation. Most officials agree both are desirable objectives, and most agree the Agency should strive to increase its performance in achieving both. Officials and employees differ, however, on the question of whether there is a sufficient amount of movement and rotation, and few agree how these elusive goals can best be accomplished.

3. Instead of talking about the advantages of mobility and rotation, it would be more productive to face head-on a number of the barriers involved. By confronting these at the outset, we can surface the anti-rotation sentiment embedded in our organizational culture, and we can consciously consider ideas for improved mobility and rotation within a framework of known objections. Some obstructions are the following:

- a. Confusion as to the meaning of mobility and rotation.
- b. Disagreement as to the purposes of increased mobility and rotation.
- c. Institutional and administrative restrictions on employee movement.
- d. Essential freedom of career services to prevent employees from crossing their borders (their careerists out and non-careerists in).
- e. Suspicions between the senders and receivers of employees transferred in mobility and rotation programs.
- f. Differences concerning the appropriate grade or age levels that should be stressed in increased mobility or rotation programs.
- g. Doubts about the usefulness of individual experiences gained in rotational exchanges or mobility movements.
- h. Employee fears that separation from parent career service for a substantial period of time may be counterproductive.

i. The very real problem that the transfer of an individual to a new career service may interdict the advancement opportunities of others in the gaining career service.

j. Difficulty in identifying meaningful experiences for transferees or rotatees, rather than makeshift tasks or training orientations that impose no accountability upon the individual.

k. Differing views relative to the desired organizational or geographical location of movement and rotation; e.g., inside versus outside an employee's career or functional specialty; within or across career service and directorate lines, intra-agency movement versus movement to other agencies, academia and industry.

l. T/O and manpower restrictions on the absorption of employees outside the jurisdiction of career services.

m. Problems of finding a replacement or absorbing the work in the losing office when a person is moved or rotated for longer than a brief interval of time.

n. Limited success in previous attempts to institute formal rotation programs.

Overcoming the Barriers to Movement and Rotation

1. These barriers can be overcome only if a set of positive values are identified and accepted throughout the organization. First, they must have the firm support of top management. Second, the objectives of increased mobility and rotation, once agreed to and declared as policy, must be implemented by practical structural arrangements and procedures; otherwise, the policy statements are apt to become rhetoric, not reality. Third, the declared policies and the administration of these policies should be monitored closely to make sure the program actually works. There is no point in achieving one of these three elements without obtaining the other two.

2. The following observations and comments are offered upon a number of popular conceptions or misconceptions, in an effort to stimulate an increased area of agreement about what mobility and rotation are and are not and what they should and should not be:

a. Mobility is freedom of individual movement. It encompasses the freedom of individuals to move within the organization, and the freedom of the organization to move employees. The absence of either constitutes a problem of immobility.

b. Whereas mobility refers to the capacity of the structure to move people quickly, whenever the need arises to fill jobs or to help employees (programmed or unprogrammed), rotation is usually a planned action designed to help an individual, and it is often a part of a sequence of planned movements arranged for developmental purposes. Exposing promising people to various parts of an organization and testing them as they move is common in business; e.g., Sears Roebuck's rotation of trainees among departments within a store and among stores in different localities. Many examples of rotational programs are also found in Government; e.g., health care executives in the VA and field office managers in IRS. Within this Agency, the term rotation also is frequently used to describe an employee's movement for a tour or a shorter period of time. When the term is used in this manner, it may relate simply to the assignment of an employee outside his component or career service with the understanding he will be returning to it later on.

c. Career services have a great deal of mobility within their own functional and geographical areas. Because of the parochial interest career services have in retaining good employees and avoiding the assumption of additional responsibility for employees outside their jurisdiction, they patrol their borders very closely. This largely unchallenged freedom constitutes the main deterrent to an office securing an employee outside its area and to an employee wishing to move from one spot to another. From an Agency standpoint these barriers have their worst impact in retarding the movement of new young professionals who acquire a career label restricting their movement even before they learn what their job will be or whether they like it.

d. Since it would be absurd to drastically change the Agency's system of career managing merely to achieve more mobility, the question posed by the independence of the career structures is to the extent to which the Agency should curb their authority for denying the admission of non-careerists or preventing the transfer-out of their careerists.

e. We should stop thinking of increased mobility and rotation in statistical terms. However impressive or modest the statistics may appear, there is enough mobility when individual interests, career development considerations and operational needs are promptly served and there is too little mobility when jurisdictional hassles and tribal disputes continually delay or defeat needed moves.

f. Although rotation is relatively easy to accomplish inside the career services, lack of planning and emphasis on specialization are factors limiting the use of rotation by career services within their own borders, in order to systematically achieve the professional development of their careerists.

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g. In the Guidelines on Executive Development in the Federal Service, mobility and rotation are cited as primary instruments for intensifying the effective utilization of executives and for exposing executives and pre-executives to new experiences. Ways will have to be found to meet these requirements even if career service prerogatives suffer, since CIA is covered by the Guidelines. Moreover, the Director's wish to achieve increased mobility and rotation of Agency employees and executives across directorate lines, when needed in the Agency's interest, is an overriding concern that should not be allowed to go by default for lack of a structure and enforcement system.

h. Although rotation may be needed at any age and grade level, it should be emphasized at the early stages of individual development. Career services should concentrate most of their rotational efforts in converting young employees from beginners to fully qualified professionals or technicians. In the lower grade levels, rotational movements produce relatively few disruptions in office procedures or T/O patterns. Moreover, the likelihood of causing damage to employees involved in shifts from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment is minimized. All of the administrative, organizational and personal objections to increased mobility and rotation multiply when middle-aged or graded officers and senior officers are the ones thrust into unfamiliar and complex tasks. Even the well-qualified may falter.

3. The Director's expressed interest in furthering Agency mobility and the binding effects of the Guidelines on Executive Development compel the undertaking of new Agency-wide initiatives to improve employee movement and rotation. To facilitate the formulation of a set of principles or guidelines for discussions in the Director's Annual Conference, or in the Executive Committee, the following approaches are suggested for consideration. It is hoped that these ideas and other views generated by them will be assimilated into an Agency blueprint for increased mobility and rotation.

a. Emphasize the rotation of young professionals within each career service by requiring each career service to prepare a rotation plan and submit it to the Deputy Director concerned for his approval.

b. Instruct each career service, unless it has previously done so, to establish a model of the kinds of job experiences (one or more) that generalist and technical officers should receive during the first six years of employment in the course of becoming technically or professionally fully competent.

c. Direct each career service to annually review the movement of individual careerists in conformance with its rotation plan and report on the results to the Deputy Director concerned.

ADMINISTRATIVE — INTERNAL USE ONLY

d. Require each career service to decide, as a part of its rotation plan, what developmental movement and rotation is needed outside the career service, if any, and who are involved.

e. Require each career service to identify some positions which may be filled by members of other career services.

f. It is hoped that the desire for movement can be met at the career service level. When this is not the case, employees must be made to feel free to seek job counseling service in the Office of Personnel. Permit the Director of Personnel to authorize, if necessary, the prospective gaining office to have up to a year's time to work out T/O and ceiling problems. Require the Director of Personnel to negotiate actively for the transfer of those who seek job counseling when he believes they can best be utilized elsewhere, particularly when the employee may leave the Agency. Reports of successes and failures to be provided periodically by the Director of Personnel to the Executive Director-Comptroller.

g. Authorize each career service head, with the concurrence of the Deputy Director concerned, to personally seek the transfer and/or rotation to his jurisdiction of an employee outside the Directorate, provided both the career service head and the Deputy Director agree the vacancy is a priority job and no one in the Directorate is better qualified to fill it.

(1) If negotiations between the career service heads are unsuccessful, authorize the Deputy Directors concerned to personally attempt to resolve the proposed transfer or rotation.

(2) Provide for appeal of the issue to the Executive Director-Comptroller for a decision, when desired by either Deputy Director or by the employee concerned.

(3) Require the Director of Personnel to seek other suitable candidates and provide his findings to the requesting career service head, the Deputy Director or Deputy Directors and the Executive Director-Comptroller, as applicable.

(4) Provide an option to the employee to transfer permanently (with change in Service Designation) to the gaining career service at the end of any rotation lasting a full year if the gaining career service agrees.

h. Consistent with the principles in the Federal Guidelines on Executive Development, arrange for the Executive Committee to annually review the utilization of all supergrades and identify (in its capacity as the Agency's Executive Manpower Resources Board) the appropriate changes in assignment or rotations for supergrades entailing movement across Directorate lines.